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## FACT SHEET

### Afghanistan Small and Medium Enterprise Development *Business Associations*

#### OVERVIEW

USAID's Afghanistan Small and Medium Enterprise Development (ASMED) project increases opportunities for trade, employment, and investment by improving private sector productivity. To achieve this objective, ASMED builds the capacity of business associations to provide member services, improve market access, establish business linkages, and serve as the voice of their member SMEs, advocating for public policy reforms that support private sector development in Afghanistan.

ASMED plays a key role in improving the organizational capacity of partner associations, working with each association to define services and products that meet the needs of its membership. ASMED also assists with the creation of strategic plans for increasing paying membership, as well as the development of fee-based products and services to achieve association financial sustainability. To be self-sustaining, associations need technical and financial support to design and implement programs and management systems. ASMED provides grants to expand member programs, develops marketing and communications channels, and sponsors market development initiatives and training.

#### ACTIVITIES

- **Business associations as private sector advocates** – Strengthening the capacity of business associations to serve their members through initiatives such as trade promotion and advocacy for legal and regulatory reforms that advance private sector growth.
- **Productive equipment and machinery** – Providing grants for the procurement of machinery and equipment shared by member businesses, facilitating organizational sustainability through increased revenue generation.
- **Sponsoring business development services (BDS) training** – Assisting associations in providing valuable training to members through linkages to BDS providers. These trainings include general organizational management and business skills training as well as industry and sector-specific technical training.
- **Other market development initiatives** – Building the capacity of private sector partners to coordinate trade fair and exhibition attendance, research and disseminate market information, and facilitate market linkages for member businesses.

#### RESULTS

- Established more than 120 (including 27 women-run) business associations and supported more than 230 associations with grants for equipment, capacity building, and improving member services.
- Facilitated 16,228 new memberships in business associations.
- Provided 137 small grants totaling \$3.45 million for market development, value chain improvement, and association capacity-building.
- Organized landmark events including the Afghan Marble and Granite Processors Association's 2009 Marble Conference and the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's first-ever nationwide elections in 2008.
- Supported the development of the Afghanistan Women's Business Federation through capacity-building training, exhibitions and conferences, trade missions, and general assemblies.
- Established an association incubator in Jalalabad to provide office space and organizational development support to five regional business associations.